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In Memoriam.

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JARED SPARKS, LL. D.

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OBIT, MARCH 14, 1866.



## MEMOIR OF JARED SPARKS, LL. D.

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THE name of JARED SPARKS is intimately associated with the historical literature of this country, and his public career is one of the most distinguished in our literary history, presenting many characteristics worthy of special notice. His fame was not confined to America, but his writings have gained for him a reputation in foreign countries. He was one of numerous individuals who have risen from humble circumstances to high positions. He has exerted a wide and beneficent influence; he has finished a good work and gained for himself a brilliant renown. Those who represent the scholarship, the literary, historical, collegiate, and Christian interests, (and these cover a wide space,) uniting the sympa-

thies and the utterances of eminent, faithful, and true men in our community, have awarded to him those tributes which give him one of the highest places among us. His life commenced ten days only after the establishment of the Federal Government. Fortunate and wise in his early interest in its history, which caused him to devote an important portion of his life to recording, with an impartial hand, the first crisis through which his country passed in the American Revolution, as illustrated in his lives of its principal founders—Washington, Franklin, and others; and happy in having seen it, before he closed his eyes, emerge in triumph from its second, and, it is to be hoped, its last terrible ordeal, he has passed away in peace, in the enjoyment of the merited respect and affection of personal friends, and honored by all.

Mr. Sparks was born in Willington, Conn., on the 10th of May, 1789. His early life was spent upon a farm, and

occasionally he was employed in a grist and saw mill. He eventually was apprenticed to a carpenter, where, after two years, his employer relinquished his legal claim upon his time that he might give himself more devotedly to study.

Dr. Ashbel Woodward, of Franklin, Conn., author of the life of Gen. Lyon, and a native of the same town, says: "He was regarded in his boyhood as a lad of great promise. He had intense thirst for learning, and, while engaged in his menial employments, gave all his leisure moments to study." Rev. Hubbel Loomis, the clergyman of the town, encouraged and aided him in his studies, taught him mathematics, of which he was particularly fond, and induced him to study Latin. In return for his good minister's kindness and instruction, he shingled his barn, thus turning his carpenter's knowledge to account. The Rev. Abiel Abbot, then of the neighboring town of Coventry, Conn., and

more recently of Peterborough, N. H., when visiting Mr. Loomis, one day, noticed young Sparks in the chimney corner, very intently engaged with his books. Mr. Loomis said to Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Abbot, in another room, before he left, "Did you notice the young man in the other room with his books?" "Yes," replied Mr. Abbot. "He is a very remarkable young man," said Mr. Loomis, "has a great thirst for knowledge, and ought to be helped to obtain a liberal education; I have promised to give him two months' instruction, and hope to interest the neighboring clergy to do as much for him." Mr. Abbot, always ready on such an occasion, said: "Most certainly I will help him; I will try to do better for him than to give him tuition at my own house; I am acquainted with the trustees of Exeter Academy, in New Hampshire, where there is a provision for worthy scholars who may be unable to pay their expenses, and I think I can get him a place

there." The result was successful. Young Sparks was thus secured a scholarship at the Phillips' Exeter Academy, on a charitable foundation, which provided not only education, but a home, free of cost. Mr. Abbot went over to Willington, after his success, and informed young Sparks, who, as may well be understood, was overjoyed at the good news. Mr. Abbot asked him how he could manage to get to Exeter. Sparks said, "If it were not for my trunk, I should walk." Mr. Abbot said, "I shall, within a few weeks, make a journey to Boston and vicinity, with my chaise, and if you can get along till that time, I will tie your trunk to my axletree and bring it to you." That arrangement was made. Soon after, when ready to start, young Sparks walked first over to see Mr. Abbot, at Coventry, and traveled from thence to Exeter, all the way on foot. This was in 1809. He remained for two years under the care of Dr. Benjamin Abbot, teaching a school one winter in

Rochester, N. H. Among his fellow-students at Exeter were John Gorham Palfrey, afterwards minister of Brattle Street Church, Boston, and now Postmaster of that city, who was his classmate at Cambridge, and George Bancroft, who was later by two years, both of whom have since shared with him the highest distinction as laborers in the field of American history.

The intimacy with each other, which was formed by these eminent men when boys at Exeter, ripened into the most cordial friendship in subsequent life, and did not, with the lapse of years, lose its freshness and its charm. The dedication, by Dr. Palfrey, of one volume of his "History of New England" to his friend, is a touching memorial of their personal and literary relations, and is equally honorable to the character of both.

Mr. Sparks entered Harvard in 1811, at the age of twenty-two years, a period when many of the graduates of Cambridge have already commenced their

professional studies. He at once stood high in a class of unusual talent. In some branches of study he had scarcely a superior, especially in mathematics and natural philosophy. In his senior year he gained the Bowdoin prize by his memoir on the physical discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton. This essay is remembered among the traditions of the University as a master-piece of analytic exposition, philosophical method and lucid and exact statement. His diligence in study, his attention to collegiate rules and his admirable disposition made him the object of general confidence and love, alike with his classmates and instructors. Young Sparks was assisted by President Kirkland, who understood his merits and his circumstances, and who was ever after his warm friend, to a scholarship on entering college, the resources of which he eked out by district-school keeping, a portion of the year, in New England, and an engagement in the first two years of his undergraduate course at a private

school at Havre-de-Grace, in Maryland, to which he was recommended by President Dwight, of Yale. While in this latter place, in 1813, it was invaded by the British troops. He served at that time in the militia, and witnessed the conflagration of the town before he left. It has been said that there were inducements offered him at this time to finish his collegiate course at New Haven. But the influence and kindness of Dr. Kirkland drew him back to Cambridge, where he graduated in 1815 with high honors. He then taught a classical school for a short time at Lancaster, Mass., after which he studied divinity under Dr. Ware, at Cambridge. In 1817, he was appointed a tutor in mathematics and natural philosophy in the College, discharging these duties for two years while pursuing his theological studies. As one of the associates to whom Mr. Tudor assigned the *North American Review*, he became its working editor—the numbers of that work from May, 1817, to March, 1819,

inclusive, were edited by him. Thus, he had three distinct labors before him, that of tutor in two branches, editor of the leading Review of the country, and student in theology.

In May, 1819, he was ordained pastor of a new Unitarian church at Baltimore, Md., which had at that time been recently established, mostly by natives of New England, who had settled in that city. One of the most splendid church edifices of that day was built for the Society. Dr. Channing preached the discourse at the ordination of Mr. Sparks. This was a famous discourse, and probably caused more remark upon its theological views, and more controversy grew out of the statement of doctrines therein declared, than any other single religious discourse in this country ever occasioned. It brought Harvard and Andover into earnest, but dignified, controversy, and caused the famous letters which passed between Doctors Ware and Woods, which were published at

the time. Mr. Sparks published at this time, in Baltimore, his letters on the "Comparative Moral Tendency of the Unitarian and Trinitarian Doctrines." They were acknowledged to be "a model of argument, learning, and polemic dexterity." Dr. Miller, of Princeton, N. J., was among Mr. Sparks' antagonists, and answered these letters. The controversy with Dr. Miller had one remarkable effect, if no other—that of bringing the two parties nearer to each other in their personal relations, and increasing their mutual confidence and respect. Many years after, when Mr. Sparks wanted a life of Jonathan Edwards for his "American Biography," he selected Dr. Miller as the writer. The latter accepted the proposal, and, it is said, was not a little surprised at the catholic spirit of Mr. Sparks in publishing the memoir of the mighty Calvinist without the alteration of a word or syllable.

Mr. Sparks' position was an isolated one in the denomination. He was sur-

rounded by opposers of all other denominations. Rev. Dr. William E. Wyatt, an Episcopal clergyman of his neighborhood, preached a sermon leveled at his doctrines, which led Mr. Sparks, in 1820, to publish a volume of Letters on the Ministry, Ritual and Doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church. In 1821, as a proof of his worth and standing, he was elected Chaplain to the House of Representatives. The same year he commenced a monthly duodecimo periodical entitled *The Unitarian Miscellany and Christian Monitor*. The motto of this work was, "Those Creeds are best which keep the very words of Scripture; and that Faith is best which hath greatest simplicity."—*Jeremy Taylor*. Three volumes of this publication were printed, edited by Mr. Sparks; and, subsequently, the work was continued through five volumes more, edited by Rev. F. W. P. Greenwood, Mr. Sparks' successor at Baltimore. It is a curious fact, that the names of four ministers

who have occupied the Baltimore pulpit were Sparks, Greenwood, Furness and Burnap—all able men, and, as their names indicate, possessing sufficient fire and fuel to burn up many evils about them, or to kindle a holy fire upon the altar at which they ministered.

Mr. Sparks also commenced, while in Baltimore, editing “A Collection of Essays and Tracts in Theology, from various Authors, with Biographical and Critical Notices.” It was afterwards completed at Boston, in 1826, in 12 Nos., making six duodecimo volumes. The selections were from Wm. Penn, Bishop Hoadley, John Hales, Jeremy Taylor, Locke, Watts, and a great number of others. This plan, though somewhat like Bishop Watson’s, was more comprehensive, liberal, and less formally arranged. Bishop Watson, by his order of arrangement, attempted to support certain tenets, one after another, but Mr. Sparks looked more directly to practical Christianity and liberal inquiry. In 1823, his health

becoming impaired by his ministerial labors and duties, he resigned his position at Baltimore, after a ministry of four years, expressing his earnest desire, in his letter of resignation, for the success of the religious views he had cherished, and which he believed to be most "honorable to God and salutary to men." Mr. Sparks traveled a few months in the Western States for his health.

In the latter part of the year 1823 he returned to Boston, purchased the *North American Review*, and became its sole editor from the number for January, 1824, to April, 1830, making seven years and six months in which he was the editor and presiding genius of this well-known periodical. W. F. Poole, Esq., Librarian of the Boston Athenæum, who has a complete list of all the writers in the *North American Review*, informs us that it contains more than fifty articles written by Mr. Sparks. Some of these are quite elaborate, and many

of them of great research, and making, by themselves, a very extensive contribution to the solid literature of our country.

His settlement at Baltimore may be considered a successful one in a double sense; it was indeed fortunate, for it was undoubtedly the near position to Washington, with his eminent ability and excellent character, which brought him into an intimate acquaintance with Chief-Justice Marshall and Judge Washington, thus securing for his use the possession of all the Washington papers at Mount Vernon. He had previously formed the purpose of making a collection of all the writings of Washington, for publication. He, in 1826, had completed a personal examination of the revolutionary papers in the public offices of all the thirteen original States and the department at Washington. In 1828, he made a voyage to Europe for the purpose of transcribing documents in the State archives at London and Paris. By the

aid of Sir James Mackintosh, the Marquis of Lansdowne, and Lord Holland, in England, and La Fayette and the Marquis de Marbois, in France, these archives were for the first time opened, for historical purposes, to his investigation.

In 1829, he returned with a valuable collection of materials to America. After nine years of preparation he commenced publishing the work in 1834, which was completed, in twelve volumes, in 1837—the first volume being occupied with a Life of Washington, which was also published separately.

The work was received with great favor here and abroad. It was reviewed by Mr. Everett in the *North American*. In France, Guizot edited a selection from the correspondence, prefixing to it his highly-prized Introductory Discourse on the Character, Influence and Public Career of Washington. In Germany, Von Raumer, the historian, prepared an edition at Leipsic.

During Mr. Sparks' visit to England

and France, he had also gathered much valuable documentary material beside what was required in his *Life and Writings of Washington*—especially of the *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution*, with which title he, by the aid of Congress, published, in 1829–30, twelve volumes, mostly derived from the American State Department, omissions being supplied from Mr. Sparks' European and other collections. This series consisted of letters of Franklin, Adams, Jay, Lee, Deane and Dana, and other agents abroad, as well as the French minister's, to Congress, during the period of the Revolution.

In 1830, he edited the *American Almanac and Repository of Useful Knowledge*. In 1832, he published the *Life of Gouverneur Morris*. He also commenced in 1834 (which was finished in 1838) the first series, in ten volumes, of *American Biography*. The second series of *Biography*, in fifteen volumes, was published from 1844 to 1848. To these extended

undertakings another, with almost equal interest with the Washington Papers, was added in 1840—the ten volumes of Franklin's writings, with notes and his life. As a proof of the author's industry, two hundred and fifty-three of Franklin's letters were there printed for the first time, and one hundred and fifty-four first brought together from scattered publications. The work also included numerous letters to Franklin, from his distinguished foreign correspondents. Mr. Sparks also edited from the original MSS., which had been in his possession, Letters of Eminent Men to George Washington. This publication appeared, in four volumes, at the end of the year 1853.

“No scholar,” says one who knew him well, “in this country has presented a more praiseworthy example of industry, perseverance and faithful endeavor. No degree of labor could divert him from the execution of his task. With no morbid passion for fame, he was content

to apply his fine powers to the performance of duties which gave him no brilliant prominence in the public eye. Amid the glare and rush of American life, his career of quiet energy and faithful working deserves to be held in grateful and honorable remembrance."

We have taken but a glance at the vast labors of Mr. Sparks. His most busy and working period seems to have been soon after his return from Europe, in 1829.

Rev. James Freeman Clarke, D. D., informs the writer of this article that Mr. Sparks lived at that time as a boarder at Mrs. Clarke's, in Ashburton place, Boston. He was then in the habit of working in his room all day on the *Life of Washington*. The walls of two rooms were covered with books from floor to ceiling, and he gave ten or twelve hours' solid work every day to his studies. For weeks together he would not leave the house until the evening, when he would go out to call on his friends. This was

during the two or three years immediately preceding his first marriage.

Mr. Sparks' first wife was Frances Anne, daughter of William Allen, Esq., of Hyde Park, N. Y., to whom he was married October 16, 1832. She died of consumption, at Hyde Park, July 12, 1835, leaving one daughter, Maria Verplank. This daughter died at Cambridge, January 3, 1846, aged twelve years and four months. Mr. Sparks' second wife was Mary Crowningshield, daughter of Hon. Nathaniel Silsbee, of Salem, Mass., to whom he was married May 21, 1839. Their children now living are Florence, William Eliot (now of the Freshman Class, Harvard College), Elizabeth and Beatrice. Mr. Sparks' own death occurred on Wednesday, March 14, 1866. Rev. R. M. Hodges, of Cambridge, his classmate, writes as follows :

“I had occasion the other day to make out the following synopsis of Mr. Sparks character :—*Habit of mind*.—Logical and methodical, the result of his mathemat-

ical studies. *Hence*, his opinions and the method of presenting them were very carefully formed and adopted. *Hence*, also, he seldom wavered or varied from his preconceived opinions, and, *hence*, he was disposed to be conservative. The result of his controversy with Lord Mahon and others shows the carefulness of his investigations and the stability of his decisions. Imagination and fancy were not characteristics of his mind. He was methodical and indefatigable in every work he had immediately in hand.

In regard to his affections, he was kind and lenient, not easy or free in conversation, but comprehensive, and with few words illustrating the leading thought at the time occupying attention. There was not the least rancor or animosity in his disposition. As President of the College, he set Dr. Kirkland before him as his model."

The pecuniary assistance that he received he never ceased to be grateful for. He, in turn, gave material encourage-

ment where industry and promise, in depressed circumstances, called for it. And in the days of his prosperity he returned to his original benefactors, not only the amount of money he had received from them, but more than the interest. President Lord, of Dartmouth, in an address to the students of his College, commemorated this honorable and grateful act of Mr. Sparks. He never ceased to do large honor to Rev. Abiel Abbot, D.D., who aided and encouraged him in getting an education as before stated.

Mr. Sparks, as President of the University, was not in favor of a martinet discipline, but wished to govern the College on the basis of confidence—treating the students as gentlemen and men of honor, and expecting them to behave as such. But there are always in the Faculty some persons, oftener among the youngest members, who have no faith in such a course and prefer a system of police, turning themselves into detective officers for that purpose.

On one occasion, one of the scholars in the institution made a noise somewhat derisive to one of the tutors as he was coming out from recitation. The tutor stated the case to the Faculty, and gave the names of several who, if not guilty, he thought might know who was. These young men were summoned before the President, who was requested to ask them, one by one, if they made the noise or knew who made it? President Sparks had previously said to the Faculty that they could not expect them to inform against their fellows—the temptation to falsehood was too great. Dr. Sparks addressed them when they came before him in substance as follows:

“I have been requested by the Faculty to ask you if you made, or know who made, the disturbance at the close of your recent recitation. I have stated to you their request; but if you know who made the noise, I do not intend to ask you to tell.”

They answered one after another, some did not know, some said they knew, but did not tell. Finally, one was called forward, who said :

“I did it myself; I know I ought not to have done it; I am sorry that I did it; I hardly know why I did it; yes, I should say it was because I did not like the tutor, as I thought he had not used me fairly in some of my recitations.”

He had told the truth, and acknowledged his fault openly and candidly. President Sparks told the Faculty that he ought rather to be commended than punished, but the tutors outvoted the others, and he was suspended. Dr. Sparks wrote a note to his father, saying that he considered it no dishonor, as young men did not often have such an opportunity to show themselves so frank and noble.

For the above anecdote I am also indebted to Rev. James Freeman Clarke, D.D.

Mr. Sparks was McLean Professor of

Ancient and Modern History in Harvard College from 1839 to 1849, and from 1849 to 1852 he held the office of President of that institution. He was engaged, after his resignation, in preparing a History of the American Revolution, in which, we believe, he had made considerable progress. He informed the writer of this, some years since, that he hardly thought he should live to complete it—intimating that he was too far advanced in life to finish it to his own satisfaction. He never allowed any thing to go from his hands in an unfinished state.

No one was more delighted in encouraging the young. The trials of his young days had proved him, and wherever he could he bestowed in kind words or charitable deeds such favors as he had himself received amid the stern experiences of his youth.

Dr. Sparks was extremely kind and liberal in imparting any special information, if desired by others, and in the loan

of books, papers and documents to those pursuing any particular branch of knowledge or history which he only might have, and which may have cost him great labor and expense. He gave his countenance and encouragement in the original establishment of the **HISTORICAL MAGAZINE**. He selected the name from a large number submitted to him, and added the remaining words of the title as now borne upon the cover. He subscribed for it in the commencement, and his subscription is paid to January, 1867.

Dr. Sparks was noble in person, dignified in bearing, graceful, exact and solid in his public address and private conversation, and pleasant, engaging and cordial in demeanor. He was revered and loved by all who knew him. The consciousness that you were in a superior presence was immediately forgotten by the influence of his most affable and Christian courtesy, and when you left him, you felt that you were, or at least that you ought to be, a better person. He in-

spired you with a love of inflexible virtue and solid learning. He gave you an elevated view of humanity, and caused you to think better of its possibilities and more of its charities. Mr. Webster said in his address at the completion of Bunker Hill Monument: "America has furnished to the world the character of Washington! And if our American institutions have done nothing else, that alone would have entitled them to the respect of mankind. \* \* \* This structure," placing his great dark eyes most expressively high up on the monument, "by its uprightness, its solidity, its durability, is no unfit emblem of his character. His public virtues and public principles were as firm as the earth on which it stands, his personal motives as pure as the serene heaven in which its summit is lost."

Dr. Sparks' character, in its foundation, in the principles of its composition, and the simplicity and massiveness of its structure, was not unlike that of his

beloved Washington, and Mr. Webster's emblem is a fit one for both.

LIST OF MR. SPARKS' WORKS.

The Life of John Ledyard, the American Traveler. 12mo. Cambridge, 1829.

Inquiry into the Comparative Moral Tendency of Trinitarian and Unitarian Doctrines. 8vo. Boston, 1823.

Letters on the Ministry, Ritual and Doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church. 2d Edition. 12mo. Boston, 1844.

A Collection of Essays and Tracts in Theology. Nos. I. to XII. April, 1823—March, 1826. 6 vols. 12mo. Boston, 1823-'26.

An Account of the Manuscript Papers of George Washington, which were left by him at Mount Vernon; with a Plan for their Publication. 8vo, pp. 24. Boston, 1827.

The Life of Gouverneur Morris; with Selections from his Correspondence. 3 vols. 8vo. Boston, 1832.

Sermon preached in the Hall of the House of Representatives, March 3, 1822, on the Death of Hon. William Pinkney. 8vo, pp. 15. Washington, 1822.

Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution. 12 vols. 8vo. Boston, 1829-'30.

The Library of American Biography ; conducted by Mr. Sparks. First Series. 10 vols. 16mo. Boston, 1838-'39.

The Library of American Biography. Second Series. 15 vols. 12mo. Boston, 1852.

In the two series of Biography there are fifty-two lives written by various popular authors, and eight (making sixty in all) are from Mr. Sparks' own pen. Those written by Mr. Sparks are Benedict Arnold, Ethan Allen, Father Marquette, De la Salle, Count Pulaski, John Ribault, Charles Lee, and a reprint of the Life of Ledyard.

The American Almanac and Repository of Useful Knowledge for the Year 1830. This number was edited by Mr.

Sparks, thus establishing the work, which was afterwards continued by others to the year 1861. The National Almanac of Philadelphia now takes its place.

The Writings of George Washington; with a Life of the Author. Notes and Illustrations. 12 vols. 8vo. Boston, 1839.

The Works of Benjamin Franklin; with Notes, and a Life of the Author. 10 vols. 8vo. Boston, 1840.

Letter to Lord Mahon: being an Answer to his Letter addressed to the Editor of Washington's Writings. 8vo, pp. 48. Boston, 1852.

Reply to the Strictures of Lord Mahon and others, on the Mode of Editing the Writings of Washington. 8vo, pp. 35. Cambridge, 1852.

Remarks on a "Reprint of the Original Letters from Washington to Joseph Reed," &c. 8vo, pp. 43. Boston, 1853.

Illustrations of the Principal Events in the Life of Washington. 4to. 1842.

Life of Washington; Abridged. 2 vols. 12mo.

Correspondence of the American Revolution: being Letters of Eminent Men to George Washington. 4 vols. 8vo. Boston, 1853.

Unitarian Miscellany. Baltimore, 1821-1823. 3 vols.

*North American Review.* 15 vols. In this work he has written over fifty articles.

Several of the above works were translated into different languages. There were various contributions to other periodicals and works not here enumerated; and it is quite possible this list does not comprehend all his works. Several of the above have been republished, and some several times.

Some appreciation of the extent of his literary labors may be attained by a statement of the fact, that *more than six hundred thousand copies of his books have been printed.*

W. R. D.











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